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APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR REWARDING GAME DEVICE USE

Abstract:

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The invention relates to an apparatus for user-dependent detection and rewarding of the use of a game device, comprising: a reader for reading a user-identification code, registration means for detecting the use of a game device, control means provided with at least a central database for linking a bonus to a user-identification code subject to the use of the game device and for storing the bonus in the central database, and at least one output station for retrieving a code-dependent, stored bonus. The invention also relates to a method for user-dependent detection and rewarding of the use of a game device. Data supplied from the esp@cenet database - Worldwide

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<p>(54) Title: APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR REWARDING GAME DEVICE USE</p> <div data-bbox="462 1176 1136 1743"></div> <p>(57) Abstract</p> <p>The invention relates to an apparatus for user-dependent detection and rewarding of the use of a game device, comprising: a reader for reading a user-identification code, registration means for detecting the use of a game device, control means provided with at least a central database for linking a bonus to a user-identification code subject to the use of the game device and for storing the bonus in the central database, and at least one output station for retrieving a code-dependent, stored bonus. The invention also relates to a method for user-dependent detection and rewarding of the use of a game device.</p>		

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Apparatus and method for rewarding game device use

The invention relates to a method and apparatus for user-dependent detection and rewarding of the use of a game device.

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Game devices, such as for instance fruit machines, are placed inter alia in amusement arcades. The turnover and profit of a particular game device is co-determined by the attraction exerted thereby. In order to increase turnover, possibilities of making the game device more attractive are therefore sought. It is a particular object to reward frequent and/or prolonged use of game devices.

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The present invention provides for this purpose an apparatus of the type stated in the preamble, comprising:

a reader for reading a user-identification code, registration means for detecting the use of a game device, control means provided with at least a central database for linking a bonus to a user-identification code subject to the use of the game device and for storing the bonus in the central database, and at least one output station for retrieving a code-dependent, stored bonus.

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Using such an apparatus a user-dependent bonus can be paid out which can be determined for instance by the time played and/or the number of games played. It is also possible to differentiate in the amount of the bonus awarded per game device. In this manner less attractive game devices can still be made interesting to use. The advantage of a central database is that the bonus data is not controlled by the user himself but is monitored centrally. This considerably reduces the danger of fraud. If a particular player wishes to know how large the accumulated bonus is, this can be read or otherwise ascertained at an output station. It is also possible to combine the output station with the reader so that the amount to which the bonus has risen can also be seen during on-site play. It will be apparent that this output can be realized in different ways, wherein the bonus can be displayed as for instance points, gifts etc.

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In the preferred embodiment the reader for reading a user-identification code is a card reader. Such a card reader is commercially available as for instance a standard magnetic card reader, bar code reader and so on. By providing interested players with cards

having a unique code for each player, the identity of a player can thus be determined in relatively inexpensive manner after insertion of the card.

The registration means for detecting the use of a game device preferably comprise a
5 device for measuring power consumption. This measuring device is preferably provided with an adjustable threshold value and can be embodied as mains adapter which is adapted to receive the plug of a power supply cable of the game device. It has been found in tests that the power consumption of a game device, such as for instance a fruit machine, differs in the rest position from the power consumption during playing of a
10 game. Depending on the type of game device the power consumption during play can be greater or smaller than in a rest position of the game device. Use can be made of this property to determine whether a particular game device is being used. In addition, it is also conceivable for the intensity with which a game device is being used to be inferred from the power consumption. In order to allow the registration means to co-act with
15 various types of game device, the threshold value is preferably adjustable, since it will have to be set subject to a particular type of game device. In addition, registration means must be adjusted such that it is known that the game device is in the activated mode precisely when it exceeds or falls below the threshold value. The advantage of the embodiment as mains adapter is that registration means can be coupled to a game device
20 without modification of the game device. Particularly where it is not permitted by legislators to make modifications in the game device without having it re-approved, it is desirable to assemble the registration means with the game device without per se modifying the game device. This can be realized in simple manner using the mains adapter. It is also noted herein that the card reader can also be embodied as a separate
25 unit which is mounted for instance on the outside of a game device so that re-approval is likewise unnecessary. It is of course also possible to integrate reader and/or registration means in a particular game device. It is recommended to do this in the case of newly built machines.

In yet another preferred embodiment the registration means are integrated with an
30 administrative system for recording the operations performed with a game device. Such administrative systems are already applied to automate management procedures and to prevent and/or track down fraud. When a particular amusement arcade already has such

an administrative system, also referred to as a "management information system", for some of the game devices, no separate registration means are required for these game devices for which the administrative system operates. The administrative system can be employed herein to provide the required general administration.

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In yet another preferred embodiment the central database is coupled to a plurality of game devices. The central database can for instance be remotely accessed and/or be coupled to game devices placed at diverse locations and connected to the central database. In accordance with the scope and structure of the organisation or organisations wishing to use an apparatus according to the invention, it is possible to choose a database located remotely from the separate establishments where the game devices are placed or a database per location. In order to also be able to inform a player remotely how high his personal bonus is, it is possible to embody the database such that it can be accessed remotely, for instance via internet.

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In order to increase privacy and make personnel unnecessary in the reading of a determined bonus, the output station can be provided with a reader.

The invention also provides a method of the type stated in the preamble, comprising the steps of: identifying a user and linking the user to a game device, detecting the use of the game device, and storing the awarded user-dependent bonus in a manner linked to the user identification. In a preferred method it is also possible to make available on request a registered user-dependent bonus. The advantages of these methods are already described with reference to the above described apparatus according to the invention.

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The present invention can be further elucidated with reference to the non-limitative embodiment described hereinbelow. The figure shows a schematic view of the apparatus according to the invention assembled with four game devices.

The figure shows an apparatus 1 according to the invention in an assembly with four devices 2. Mounted on the top of each game device 2 is a card reader 3 in which a slot 4 is arranged for insertion of a card. Each game device 2 is provided with a power supply

cable 5 to which is fixed a plug 6. Plugs 6 are placed in an adapter 7 which is inserted in each case into a wall socket 8. A device (not shown) for measuring power consumption is incorporated into each adapter 7.

5 Switch box 9 is in contact with adapters 7 and card readers 3 via respective signal lines 10, 11. The data from card readers 3 and adapters 7 can be transferred through switch box 9 to a central computer 12 which contains a central database. An output station 13 consisting of a card reader 14 and a display 15 is also connected to central computer 12 via a signal line 16.

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Card readers 3 can each be provided with a switch for detecting whether or not a card has been placed in card reader 3. If no card has been placed in card reader 3, central computer 12 will skip reading of both reader 3 and the associated adapter 7. However, when a card has been placed in card reader 3, this is read by card reader 3 and the data
15 transferred to central computer 12. Adapter 7, which functions as means for registering whether or not the relevant game device 2 is in use, is herein also read. If power consumption exceeds respectively falls below a set threshold value, central computer 12 will register, depending on the adjustment of this value, whether or not the relevant game device 2 is in use. This use is linked to the identification code of the card placed
20 in card reader 3 which is stored in the central database of computer 12. Depending on the setting of switch box 9 the card readers 3 will be read sequentially, for instance in each case after a time interval of several seconds.

When after a time a user wishes to be informed how much the amassed bonus
25 entitlement is, the user will go to the output station 13. After his card has been inserted in card reader 14, the display 15 shows how much the amassed bonus entitlement is.

Although the invention is elucidated with reference to only a single embodiment, it will be apparent to all that the invention is in no way limited to the described and shown
30 embodiment. On the contrary, many variations are still possible for the skilled person within the scope of the invention. Registration of whether or not a determined game device 2 is in use can thus be integrated for instance with game device 2 instead of

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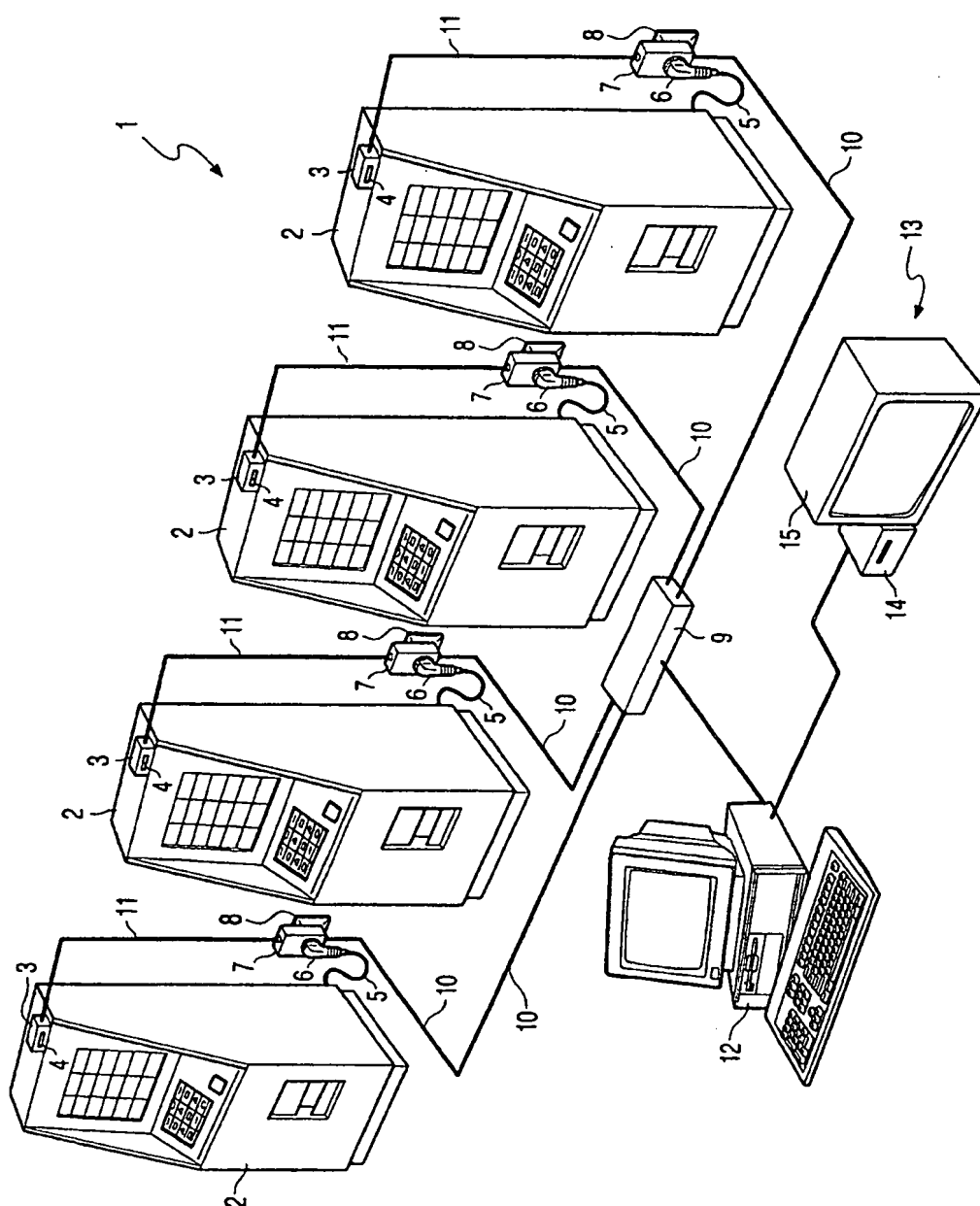
running via a separate adapter. Card reader 3 can also be integrated with game device 2, while other variants for identifying a particular player can also be envisaged. In addition, numerous possibilities are conceivable for identification of the player, for instance by keying in a unique code at the start of use.

Claims

1. Apparatus for user-dependent detection and rewarding of the use of a game device, comprising:
 - 5 - a reader for reading a user-identification code,
 - registration means for detecting the use of a game device,
 - control means provided with at least a central database for linking a bonus to a user-identification code subject to the use of the game device and for storing the bonus in the central database, and
 - 10 - at least one output station for retrieving a code-dependent, stored bonus.
2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the reader for reading a user-identification code is a card reader.
- 15 3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the registration means for detecting the use of a game device comprise a device for measuring power consumption.
4. Apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein the device for measuring power consumption has an adjustable threshold value.
- 20 5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 3 or 4, wherein the registration means are embodied as mains adapter which is adapted to receive the plug of a power supply cable of the game device.
- 25 6. Apparatus as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the registration means are integrated with an administrative system for recording the operations performed with a game device.
7. Apparatus as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the central database is
- 30 coupled to a plurality of game devices.

8. Apparatus as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the central database can be remotely accessed.
9. Apparatus as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein game devices placed at
5 diverse locations are connected to the central database.
10. Apparatus as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the output station is provided with a reader for reading a user-identification code.
- 10 11. Method for user-dependent detection and rewarding of the use of a game device, comprising the steps of:
A) identifying a user and linking the user to a game device,
B) detecting the use of the game device, and
C) storing the awarded user-dependent bonus in a manner linked to the user
15 identification.
12. Method as claimed in claim 11, also comprising the step of:
D) making a registered user-dependent bonus available on request.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 A63F3/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 A63F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 95 30944 A (FRANCHI) 16 November 1995 (1995-11-16) page 15, line 3 -page 17, line 10 claims 1-15; figures 5,6 -----	1,2,6-12

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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